

25 October 1973

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: West European Response to the War in the
Middle East

Summary

The reaction in Western Europe to the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East has been characterized principally by apprehension over its potential consequences for detente and for Europe's oil supplies, and by frustration over Western Europe's inability to affect the situation one way or another. The countries that are members of the European Communities have attempted to concert their views toward the crisis, but because of their differing interests and the weakness of the EC's political institutions, the result has not gone beyond bland calls for an end to the hostilities. The attempts to come up with a concerted response to the threatened oil shortage has been similarly ineffectual--principally because the supply circumstances vary so much from country to country, but also because some of the countries have hoped they would be excepted from the producers' embargo.

Despite the decline in public sympathy for Israel in recent years, popular opinion has been generally more pro-Israel than have the policies of the various governments. In some cases, this has been a restraint on the positions the governments have taken. On balance, however, the resulting policies of "neutrality" or "even-handedness" have tended to benefit the Arabs more than the Israelis--an example of this being Britain's embargo on arms shipments to the belligerents. The individual governments--the Portuguese and West German--that were helpful in facilitating the US resupply

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effort did so with considerable reluctance, and the response to the US argument that the war posed a direct threat to the security of us all was far from unanimous. There has even been some undercurrent of resentment against the US for having produced the predicament that Europe finds itself in.

In the negotiations that follow the cease-fire, the West Europeans will almost certainly continue to urge the US to press Tel Aviv to make further concessions. Some of them--like the British--will be prepared, however, to contribute to an international security force. A run-down of country responses follows:

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